Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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“The mute man spoke and the crowds were amazed” (Luke 11:14).

Jer 7:23-28; Lk 11:14-23

Today's Gospel story of the healing of a man possessed by a mute spirit brought to mind a friend from many years ago who was known for his tremendous laugh. He could literally fill a large room with booming and contagious joy that burst out of him when he found something funny.

After a particularly noisy session, a colleague suggested that his explosive laughter might be an expression of some deep, suppressed impulse. It was an odd contention, mostly because it came from someone who seldom laughed and considered himself always proper and under control.

Thinking back at this experience of an apparent effort to shame and suppress an amazing gift, I wondered if the opposite isn't the case. It is not those who express themselves freely that we need to worry about, but those who bottle everything up, who block awareness and access to their own inner need to show emotion. A spontaneous show of feeling can be a sign of health. For those who like to analyze things, repressed emotion can be a sign of hidden fears and desires in the unconscious that limit and distort a mature response to life around us.

The man Jesus liberates in today's Gospel is afflicted with a curious condition. He is possessed by a demon that was mute. Rather than uncontrolled outbursts, the man was unable to express himself. What is human life except the freedom to express ourselves? We are most human by revealing who we are in speech and emotion, which leads to relationships with other people also expressing themselves in communication. We become human by speaking, gesturing, singing, creating and befriending one another.

The crowds were amazed by Jesus' ability to bring life to wounded people. But some critics, instead of praising him for his compassion, rejected his ministry by claiming it was empowered by evil. He was expelling demons because he was in league with the "prince of demons." Perhaps these critics were jealous of Jesus' healing power and authority, so they twisted the obvious good he was doing into something dangerous and bad. Jesus rejects this illogical argument with the saying that a kingdom divided itself cannot stand, adding that, "if it is by the finger of God that I drive out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you."

Holiness is never far from our humanity. It was Irenaeus who said, "The glory of God is a human being fully alive." Let us rejoice in the gifts God has given us by using

them fully today. This is a glimpse of the persons we will be in heaven.

Not long ago, I heard from my laughing friend. He had gone on to a successful life in ministry, touching many people with his gift of humor and the freedom to express it. His story has shown the tracing of the “finger of God” through many lives in need of laughter and liberating joy.